

MINUTES OF HAVERHILL TOWN BUDGET HEARING
Thursday, February 13, 2017
Draft Subject to Review, Correction and Approval at Following Meeting

Board Members Present: Wayne Fortier, Tom Friel, Christopher Luurtsema, Mike Bonanno and Darwin Clogston

Town Manager: Jo Lacaillade

Advisory Budget Committee Members: Dan Brady

Department Heads: Chief Charles

Members of the Public Present: Ron Willoughby, Leslie Waterman, Mike Thompson, North Haverhill Fire Chief Phil Blanchard, Haverhill Corner Fire Chief Richard Morris, Woodsville Fire Chief Jeff Robbins, Steve Robbins, Kevin VanNorden, Shawn Bigelow, Preston Hatch, Peter Blanchard, Ben Moulton, Keith Brown, Lou Loutrel, Keith Brown, Jeff Brooks, Jon Bouffard, Steve Corzilius, and Rick Ladd.

Call Hearing to Order: Chairman Fortier called the Public Hearing on the proposed 2017 budget to order at 7:00 PM. He gave an overview of the process that the budget has already gone through. He recognized Dan Brady who was chair of the Advisory Budget Committee and present tonight. The budget presented tonight is the final budget decided on by the Selectboard to be presented at this public hearing and reflects a projected tax decrease. He gave an overview of staffing changes in the Selectboard office. He spoke about the software program for the Town Clerks office that is in this year's budget; the money for the cleanup of a dilapidated property in Woodsville; and contract negotiations that are under way. The budget proposes a 2% increase for employees with the exception of a 3% for 2 officers in the Police Department. He reviewed the training program that needs to take place before both of the 2 new officers are totally trained and in place. He gave an overview of the sewer line grant study. There is a change in the sewer hook-up line this year due to Howard Hatch asking that old Town Meetings be reviewed because the \$12,500 of the hook-up fees that belong to the Town were supposed to be going into a trust fund and so if there is a sewer hook-up in 2017 and beyond, those monies collected as the Town portion will go to that trust fund. The expenditure line will now reflect \$25,000 showing all that comes in, is going back out. He said that the Fire Departments are in need of new equipment, specifically air packs. He referred to the Emergency Management budget which this year includes a \$40,000 line item to clean up a hazardous and dilapidated building which the Town has undertaken a court case against the owner. He gave an overview of the process ahead. Also in the budget is a new highway truck and some information of the truck that is currently out of commission. The new truck is scheduled to be purchased with a lease purchase agreement instead of the full amount all at once. He said that a lot of time has been spent on recycling during the past year. At the end of the research and contract negotiations the Selectboard decided to remove a Town sponsored recycling option. They did this based on the number of users that the Town had going to Newbury compared to the number of residents in Town. They felt that there were not enough users to warrant this. At least one private contractor plans to offer the service. If there is a strong push at Town Meeting to have recycling, it could be added back in. He gave an overview that the \$40,000 that has normally been budgeted for vehicle capital reserve has been increased to \$50,000 at the recommendation of Darwin Clogston because the amount being set aside is not keeping up with the costs of purchasing.

Chairman Fortier asked for questions. Steve Robbins provided more information regarding the property on Chapel Street and where the Town is in the process and how there are plans to deal with other properties down the road. Chairman Fortier stated that the Town not having zoning except in a couple of village districts limits what the Town can do but when a property poses a health or safety threat, there are some options available to the Town.

The fire departments were present to provide information regarding their request for air packs in the budget. Chief Blanchard demonstrated 2 air packs that the North Haverhill Fire Department has in their inventory that are both defective and the danger to firefighters if they were to use them without knowing they were defective. He said there is no price that could be put on the lives of a fireman. The company that they purchased the air packs from is no longer in business and you cannot get parts. He talked about the safety to his department if they use this faulty equipment and no department should be sending members into a building with unsafe equipment and having different air packs that require different training. There was a review about how many packs are being purchased and how they are being paid for. There was support giving that all air packs were being purchased as a combined purchase which means a reduced cost to the Town, they are looking at purchasing 27 air packs at roughly \$5,400 each. Discussion ensued about future planning of large purchases so that they don't all come into the budget at once and adding to a fund to place in reserve money for future purchases. Jeff Robbins stated that Woodsville has been doing that and will be using some of that reserve as a down payment on their air packs. Phil said that in North Haverhill they use any remaining balance in their fire budget and they pay the principal down on the fire truck loan every year with that leftover balance; perhaps they could instead pay down the air pack note. There was more discussion about reserving money over the next few years to lessen the impact of purchase down the road. There was discussion about the cost of fire coverage in the Town of Haverhill. Rick Ladd said that he has spoken with Jo recently about expanding the authority of the Fire Equipment Committee or establishing a new committee to include more than just rolling stock and include the large purchases of equipment; they would look at warranties, compatibility and needs of the departments as a whole. When you look at huge costs such as the air packs, he feels there should be more review. There was discussion about the NFPA rules that apply and which areas they cover. There was a brief discussion about payroll in the different departments. It was stated that fireman get paid the same rates and the officers get paid the same rate. Jeff Robbins said that Woodsville responds to more calls so that is why theirs is higher. Darwin asked if the stipends are all paid the same way. Rick said that in Haverhill Corner the stipends might be paid differently depending on how they are allocated. Steve Robbins said the stipends are the same total amount for each department. Chairman Fortier asked the Chief why his professional services budget was up. Chief said that it has to do with changes in contracts and the Taser replacements and evidence.com. The per capita cost for ambulance was discussed which is a \$2 per capita increase. Leslie Waterman asked what the salary line was in the JRM budget, to which Wayne responded it was for part of Rich Clifford's and 2 part time people. Mike Thompson asked about the property that the Town is working through the courts on with regards to the tax money and the process of taking them for back taxes. The process that goes along with the taking of property is sometimes lengthy and cumbersome. Mike Thompson asked if having zoning would help being able to do more against the property owners. Chris said that he was a proponent of zoning when he came on the Board but he understands that the Planning Board wants more thought put into the process before it is brought back to the voters. There was a discussion about how many properties there are in Town that fall into the hazardous and dilapidated category and how that might be affecting other property values. Wayne stated that ballot voting would be held on March 14th and the business portion of the meeting will be held on March 18th. With no further questions Chairman Fortier closed the public hearing at 8:02 pm.

Chris Luurtsema made a motion to approve the budgeted revenues and expenditures as presented in the amount of \$4,343,896 as presented; seconded by Mike Bonanno. The motion carried unanimously.

There was a brief discussion about the French Pond Note which will be paid off this year. Jo thought the loan was for Clark Pond but she would check and let the Board know. There was a brief discussion about the \$6,000 showing in the budget for Visiting Nurse Association. It has to be reflected because it was a petitioned warrant article but it will have a note that it is not supported by the Selectboard or the Advisory Budget Committee. There was a brief discussion about recycling.

Mike Bonanno made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Tom Friel and all approved. Chairman Fortier adjourned at 8:19 pm.

Minutes transcribed by Jo Lacaillade